

# WHAT CAN I DO?

There are many ways to get involved and spread the word about how dangerous and deceptive these cigar products are to youth. Sharing information on the science and data regarding cigar use and the trap youth fall prey to will increase awareness among parents, decision-makers, and community members that these cigar products are sold in the same flavors and prices as ice cream, but are just as addictive and dangerous as cigarettes!

## Know What is Going on in Your Community

It's best to know how the cigar issue is impacting your own community. There are several easy ways to obtain this information. From your research, you can create a presentation document that includes pictures, data, and other relevant information that demonstrates the scope of the cigar issue within your community, and can help to tell your "story". Displaying this information to educate the general public and decision-makers showing what is going on in your community will visually demonstrate how prevalent and available these products are and why this is an issue.

### ► Environmental Scan

An environmental scan is an activity in which a specific object or subject is observed, monitored, and documented within your local environment. In this case, explore your county and community to document the prevalence of cigar use, and how they are sold and advertised. There are resources already developed to assist with these types of activities. The **Store Alert** website – [www.storealert.org](http://www.storealert.org) – provides the tools and templates needed to complete an environmental scan of the retail stores in your community.

### ► Informal Surveys

Develop a brief survey to ask local youth and adults what they know about cigarillos and cigars, who is using them, if they use flavored products, and where they see of these products advertised.

### ► Photo Voice

If a picture is worth a thousand words, what words can you give to photos of local presence and influence of cigars? Take photos of cigars related to **anything** you observe in your community, and provide a caption of up to a paragraph of what you think/how you feel about it. Document when and where cigars were observed. Further information on the Photo Voice process may be found at [www.photovoice.org](http://www.photovoice.org).

### ► Share Information

Share the information provided in this packet and on TheCigarTrap.com with parents, decision-makers, and stakeholders in your community.

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► **Content Analysis**

Choose a specific medium of information or entertainment, like magazines, local newspapers, movies, websites (including social networking sites), etc, and document how often you observe tobacco use/advertisements. Document how often cigar use/ads occur, in which medium it was observed, and who you think the intended audience of the medium is. For example, if you observe a cigar ad in a magazine that is popular among youth, the intended audience is probably youth.

► **State and National Data**

You can find information about cigar use from state and national resources. Having this evidence-based data on hand is important in order to further demonstrate the dangers of cigar use. Below are a few links to get you started:

► **Maryland Monitoring Changing Tobacco Use Behaviors 2000-2010 Data Report:**

<http://fha.maryland.gov/pdf/ohpetup/HG13-1004d-FHA-BiennialTobaccoReport.pdf>

► **Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids:** <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0333.pdf>

► **American Legacy Foundation:** <http://www.legacyforhealth.org/3362.aspx>

► **National Cancer Institute:** <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Tobacco/cigars>

► **American Cancer Society:** <http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/CancerCauses/TobaccoCancer/CigarSmoking/cigar-smoking-toc>

► **Food and Drug Administration:** <http://www.fda.gov/TobaccoProducts/ProtectingKidsfromTobacco/FlavoredTobacco/ucm183198.htm>

► **Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, The Cigar Trap:** <http://www.TheCigarTrap.com>

## Educate your community

Now that you know the facts about youth cigar use and its prevalence in your jurisdiction, you are in the position to educate others in your community. Increasing awareness about the dangers of these products will help to shift the social norm to **tobacco free** environments.

The media can be an excellent way to spread awareness about your topic. You can write a Letter to the Editor or OpEd in your local newspaper. These editorial sections are the most widely read sections of a paper and will spread your message very effectively. Another easy way to get your message heard is to post comments online when others publish articles or write editorials.

Discuss the issue in schools, with parents, decision-makers, community stakeholders, and friends to educate them on the evidence-base about cigar use. The more you talk about the issue, the more people will be aware of the danger of these products leading to a decrease in the use of cigars among youth and adults.

Work with youth in your community. Hearing messages against the use of these products from youth will have a powerful message.